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THE
BELFAST MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

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COMMUNICATIONS, ORIGINAL AND SELECTED.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

ON THE CHANGES OF FASHION.

FROM the lowest ebb of obscurity, to the highest point of sceptred royalty, there rules a predominant principle of imitation. Though by an irreversible decree of fate, all things upon earth are subject to vicissitude and variation, yet throughout the whole extent of space, there is nothing so variable as fashion.

The palefaced Moon, with exact regularity performs every month her unvaried revolution. The azure sea ebbs and flows in regular and uninterrupted succession; but fashionable more changeable than the wind (or even the volatile mind of an inconstant person) varies according to the whim or caprice of one coxcomical or pendent individual. On Monday morning, perhaps, it lies in perfect tranquillity on the same board with a rusty needle and thimble; but starting up on a sudden, it appears in the shape of a pair of cassimere boots, and travelling, with majestic strides, in the course of a few hours it circumambulates every street and parades through every lane. Imitation immediately seizes the surrounding crowd, and every breast is inflamed with an ardent desire to correct the natural deformity of *spindle-shanks* or *bandy-legs*. Numbers of young men panting and almost breathless crowd around the taylor's door, vying with each other, about

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the exalted honour of being admitted into the august presence of Mr. Stitch. The clipping of measures, the crash of breaking needles, and the entertaining dialogue between the *goose* and *lap board*, forming a most delightful concert. Stitch, works day and night without interruption and in the course of a few weeks produces such an admirable effect, that all the old women are astonished to see such a number of young bucks parading the streets, with the wrong ends of their legs down.

At another time, fashion springs out from behind the counter of a milliner's shop, and appearing in the form of a triangular piece of muslin, is folded round a gentleman's neck, having one of the corners suspended down his breast. The beau thus equipped, struts along, having a large poultice tied under his chin. The gazing eyes of the populace are immediately turned upon him, and every person is instantaneously in love with his new method of tying his cravat. The rich imitate him from a sense of novelty, and the poor from convenience and economy; for, this modern discovery in point of tying cravats, completely supersedes the necessity of wearing shirts; and indeed, were all the changes of fashion so highly advantageous to the lower orders of life, then would there be sufficient reason to extol the wisdom and prudence of those persons, who were instrumental in producing them. By means of this valuable discovery

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the labourer or artisan, who possesses but one shirt, and who was formerly obliged to lie in bed until it was washed, is now enabled to walk about, or attend the public places of religious worship, displaying a *nine-penny cravat*, tied in a style not inferior to that of him, who officiates at the altar. The only objection that has as yet been stated against this method of wearing cravats, is that of an old *laundry-maid*, who is almost starving in consequence of the new act made for the banishment of shirts.

Would the ladies not take offence at me, for having placed the gentlemen before them, which, by the bye, is the order of nature. I should consider myself highly honoured, by being permitted to congratulate them upon some notable discoveries and beneficial improvements in the realms of the toilet. The easiness of manners and unaffected simplicity of dress, exactly keeps pace with the progressive refinement in taste and politeness. The British ladies then, of course, have the highest claim to merit and esteem, for in endeavouring to conform to natural simplicity, like mother Eve, they go almost naked, displaying to every gazing eye the most delightful transparencies and natural curiosities. The eye of every admirer is struck with the fascinating sight of beautiful arms, ivory necks, &c. &c. Pockets for some time have, in this country, undergone wonderful changes and revolutions, being transferred from place to place with almost irresistible rapidity, and have at last been entirely banished from all the gay circles of life. They are now succeeded by a variety of diminutive receptacles known by the name of public ridicules. Surprising indeed! To see young ladies the voluntary objects of ridicule, while parading the streets. With respect to the

head-dress of the present day, though perhaps not quite so towering or umbrageous as those of antiquity, yet they are certainly far more convenient, being so much sloped away towards the chin, as perfectly to accommodate the operation of kissing: Fashion, however, is not solely confined to the common concerns of life, or the various changes of dress, but is sometimes seen perched upon that sanctified box, vulgarly called the pulpit, so that no person in the present age, can be fully qualified for holy declamation, without being possessed of the fashionable apparatus, which in general consists of two pocket-handkerchiefs, a watch, a well stored snuff box, and a few ounces of tobacco. No wonder then, that those preachers who ascend the pulpit, without all their insignia, should frequently find themselves at a loss for a word or sentence; but indeed it is admirable to see how they compensate such defects by coughing, spitting and sneezing. Habit has so familiarized our modern orators to these expedients, that wherever one of them is at a loss for a word, he coughs, spits, and goes through a variety of little manoeuvres to keep up the attention of his audience. But the orator who is furnished with all the true auxiliaries of preaching, enters the pulpit with perfect serenity and composure, sits down, pulls out his white pocket handkerchief, for you must know that he wears two, one for the polite and another for the common people, which being a few times displayed with an air of gracefulness, he puts into his pocket, then rises up, makes a few of his best faces, and begins the service. After having gone through the common routine of psalmody and supplication, he finds his mouth and tongue so greatly parched, that he is utterly unable to

articulate, in order to rectify which, he thrusts into his mouth a few plugs of tobacco. This at once excites a copious portion of fluidity, and from its acid qualities affects the nerves in such a powerful manner as to produce an immense quantity of those grimaces, which are frequently imposed upon the vulgar, for the genuine effects of that religion which is pure and without alloy, sincere, and unaffected, free from superstition and hypocrisy. He then takes out his two pocket handkerchiefs, one in each hand, and after blowing his nose with the one used to please the vulgar, he wipes it with his polite one; takes out his snuff-box, goes through all the genteel manœuvres, and takes a copious pinch. He makes a tedious introduction, with a few occasional interruptions of sneezing and wiping his nose. After employing a considerable time in convincing his audience by ocular demonstration, that he has a very handsome watch, he increases in vigour, takes a new quid, grows pathetic, thumps the cushion, empties his snuff-box (which lay open) upon the head and eyes of the offending clerk; his fury then increases, his passion becomes unbounded, and amidst the greatest paroxysms of rage, he showers mouthfuls of the tobacco essence upon all around him, to the unspeakable injury of silks and muslins.

Some of our fashionable preachers in the present age, in order to spin out the time, prolong every word to its greatest extent, and articulate every syllable, so as to render their sermons a continuation of emphatical monotony. Others again who delight in sacred music, sing all their prayers and sermons to the old tune of *Dublin*, and thus waft their meditations on the wings of melody, to the throne of God. The vulgar ear is immediately captivat-

ed by these musical strains, and our singing orators all become quite popular. *Habit* has so reconciled the old people to this sort of canting, that should any one void of the melodious voice and fashionable hypocrisy ascend the pulpit, he is immediately branded with the appellation of a *new light heterodoxian*, quite devoid of that sanctimonious air, lengthened face and Calvinistic tune possessed by the down-right, *red-hot* orthodox divines. I would therefore strongly recommend such parents as are apt to *foreordain* their children to the church, early to teach them the tune of *Dublin*; to apply to their faces such emollient plasters and salves as will produce an extraordinary tension of the muscles, and suspend the chin at least fifteen or sixteen inches. It will likewise be necessary to drill those elected sons of Levi, in the exercise of snuffing and sneezing, and using the white and dark pocket handkerchiefs. From the increasing price of tobacco, it might appear advisable to teach them to chew, as while in their early state of probation their finances might seldom allow them to get a quid. Upon a parity of reasoning some people will affirm that, the use of snuff should likewise be prohibited; but my reply to this, is, that as the mouth gets so much food, the nose being a near relative, and peaceful neighbour, has certainly a claim to a little.

AN ANTIQUARIAN.

For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE OPENING OF THE THIRD SESSION OF THE BELFAST HISTORIC SOCIETY, BY JOHN TEMPLETON, H.M.B.H.S., AUGUST 24TH, 1813.

FROM the first establishment of this society, I hailed it as an e-